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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
4 of 5

No Man's Land

AGUIRRE-SACASA

PERKINS

MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND

Two months ago, something happened at Project Blue in California. Within weeks, a flu-like virus—"Captain Trips"—swept through the world, killing off 99% of the population. Now, it's up to the survivors to piece together a new life in a world that has moved on.

Things in Boulder are starting to look up, if only slightly. Committees have been formed to perform clean-up and electrical operations, while the Free Zone Committee continues its attempts to maintain a sense of order. Because as difficult as society is to maintain, jumpstarting it from a dead stop is even harder. But the rays of light shining through into the Free Zone are marred by a bleak overcast glow, a reminder of the threat from Las Vegas—a threat that draws nearer with each passing day.

In a world where everything has its equal, there is no light without dark - and a crushing darkness has crept into The Boulder Free Zone, poisoning all that has been rebuilt with the coarse, perverse influence of the Dark Man. Las Vegas has become his kingdom, a grisly place that is the very definition of everything wrong with the world.

In a few short days, Harold plans to detonate a homemade device capable of leveling Boulder. But unknown to him, Frannie and Larry have both discovered his ledger—and its monstrous contents. Sensing that the threat he poses is closing in, Frannie and Larry join forces—united by Leo Rockaway—but they may be too late.

Concealing the explosive in Boulder, Nadine takes to the outskirts of town to clear her head. But where clarity lingers, the Dark Man invades. Nadine is afraid, and Randall Flagg knows it. She returns to Harold, her hair turned to pure white. It's time to go west.





**SEPTEMBER 1, EVENING.
FRAN AND STU'S PLACE.**

Downstairs, Leo was stretching out on his guitar, singing a song Fran remembered, dimly, but couldn't quite place.

Hey baby I came down here tonight And I didn't come to get in no fight, I just want you to say if you can, Tell me once and I'll understand Baby, can you dig your man?



He's a righteous man, Baby, can you dig your man?

I remember this one, Larry...it was big just before the flu...

What was the guy's name? The one who did it?



I...can't remember, Frannie.

Pop music came and went so fast.

All right, I finished reading it...



Now I've got a *damn* headache.

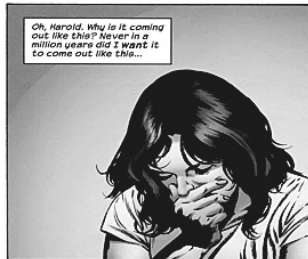
No question: Harold's dangerous.

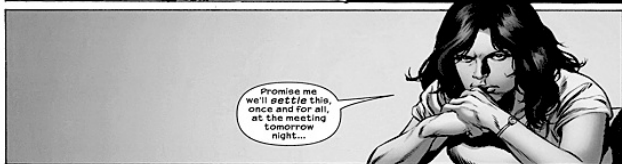


I'll, too. Harold's ill.

What should we do, Stu? Arrest him?

I just don't know. I want to talk it over with the committee tomorrow night.





"I just... I want this
to be over."

SEPTEMBER 2, JUST BEFORE DAWN.

SUNRISE AMPHITHEATRE.

Nadine was asleep in their
tent, but Harold was staring
down at the pitch-black
town of Boulder.

We'll be back... We'll
be back driving
charlots...

The bastards had stolen everything
from him—Frannie, his self-respect,
then his ledger, now his hope. He
felt that he was going down...

(From their tent, Nadine moaned
in her sleep. It was a scary sound.
Harold thought she was as lost
as he was, maybe worse...)

He needed to keep
sane. And to keep
reminding himself:

He was on his great
adventure, and he
would go down in
the history books...

All
right, we're
going through
with it.

Around and above Harold,
the dark September wind
drummed through the trees...

**FOURTEEN HOURS LATER.
RALPH BRENTNER'S HOUSE.**

*The Free Zone
Committee
meeting.*

*In attendance, its seven members:
Stu Redman, Fran Goldsmith, Larry
Underwood, Ralph Brentner, Nick
Andros, Susan Stern, Glen Bateman.*

*And invited guests: Brad
Kitchner, Al Bundell, George
Richardson, and Chad Norris.*

*Frannie had Harold's ledger
in her pack, between her
folded legs.*

*Her back was propped against
the door of the closet where
Nadine had planted the bomb.*

A black and white comic panel showing a man named Stu. He is wearing a light-colored jacket over a dark shirt and is holding a handgun in his right hand. He has a serious expression on his face.

Stu turned the meeting over to a blushing, nervous Kitchner:

*I'm Real.
Happy. To be.
Here.*

*The...ah...
power!*

*Right!
The power
is almost
on!*

A black and white comic panel showing a man named Brad. He is sitting on a couch, leaning back with his eyes closed. He is wearing a dark jacket. In the background, another person is partially visible.

*The fire Ralph had
kindled snapped
comfortably...*

*Brad was lobbying for a crew to
turn off all the appliances that
might have been left on post-
plague, so that his generators
wouldn't overload again...*

A black and white comic panel showing a close-up of a woman's face. She has dark, wavy hair and is looking slightly to the side with a thoughtful expression.

*...and Fran was thinking,
it's going to be all right.*

*Harold and Nadine had taken
off without any prompting,
so that problem was solved;
Stu was safe from them.*

A black and white comic panel showing two characters. On the left is a woman with dark hair, looking off to the side. On the right is a man named Harold, shirtless and wearing glasses, with his hand on his forehead in a distressed or thoughtful pose.

*Poor Harold... I felt sorry
for you, but in the end, I
felt more fear than pity...*

*The pity is still there, and
I'm afraid of what might
happen to you, but I'm glad
your house is empty, and
you and Nadine have gone...*

*I'm glad you've
left us in peace.*

MEANTIME:

Harold had gone to that cold and alien place; he was holding the twin of the walkie-talkie attached to the bomb; Nadine was keyed up, and needed to go to the bathroom.

When, Harold?

Pretty soon.

The committee voted 7-0 to empower Brad's Turning-Off Crew.

Chad Norris went next, talking about the Burial Committee.

...the job is getting done and I don't think we're going to have to worry about diseases breeding in the bodies...

Fran shifted her position so she could look out at the last of the day...

She felt a sudden wave of homesickness that was totally unexpected and almost sickening in its force.

Outside, the gold light that had surrounded the mountain peaks was fading to a less spectacular lemon color.

It was five minutes to eight.

If Nadine didn't go soon, in the bushes, she was going to wet her pants...

It's getting late, Harold, it's past eight o'clock.

They'll be there half the night, clapping each other on the back. When the time's right, I'll pull the pin. Don't you worry.

But when?

Like I said, soon.

Just as soon as it's dark.

Al Bundeli was briefing them about the Law Committee...

...we've had four meetings in the last week, and the system we've decided on is a kind of tribunal...

...and Frannie stifled a yawn.

They were going to run late and Fran wanted, suddenly, to be back at her apartment with Stu, just the two of them.

There was no reason for the feeling, but she didn't want to be in this house anymore. She wanted to get out. In fact, she wanted them all to get out.





8:35 PM.

The last of the light had gone from the sky. It was time. Harold would depress the walkie's SEND button and blow them all to hell by saying--

What's that?

A daisy-chain of lights, snaking up the Baseline.

The faint roar of a great many motorcycle engines.

Harold felt a thin thread of disquiet, but threw it off.

Doesn't matter. This is it.

Nadine's face was a white blur in the darkness--

Harold pressed the SEND button--



They didn't move fast enough. That would always be on Frannie's heart. That they didn't move fast enough.



Stu was the first one out the door, outside--

Then Larry--

What's up, Stu?

I don't know, but we better get the others out here--

Dick? What the hell?



Pick Volman roared over the motors:

Mother Abagail! She's come back!

She's in terrible shape! We need a doctor-- a miracle!



What?

The old woman's back? Where?



Get on my bike, doc! Don't ask questions. Just be quick!



With Doc Richards riding behind him, Dick Vollman turned in a tight circle, heading back towards town--



Larry tried to meet Stu's eyes...

...but there was a gathering cloud in Stu's head, and suddenly a terrible feeling of impending doom engulfed him...



...Frannie, he thought.

Nick,
come on!
Come on!

Nick Andros couldn't talk, but suddenly he knew. It came from nowhere-- from everywhere-- and he knew.



There was something in the closet--

He gave Fran a tremendous push towards the front door--

NICK--



Dammit, Nick--



The next thing Fran knew, she was outside, next to Stu:

Something-- something--

Frannie, what are you talking about?

Death! I'm talking about death and Nick is still in there!

He was ripping madly at the tangle of things inside, praying to God he wasn't too late--

What about Nick?

We have to get him out-- Stu--something's going to happen, something awful--

Stu, please, we have to get Nick out of there!

Nick pulled aside a handful of scarves and mittens and found something--

The shoebox with the bomb--

Just as Harold Lauder's voice issued from inside it--

This is Harold Emery Lauder speaking.

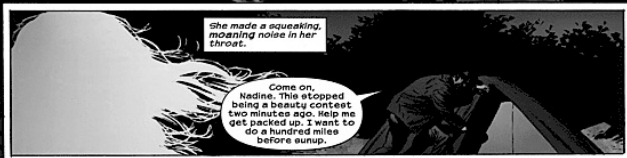
I do this of my own free will.



*That was when the
house blew up.*

*And a fire-rose bloomed
at the base of Flagstaff
Mountain.*





The last thing Fran
felt was a warm
push of air.

Now, she was
hearing...birds?

She was thinking of her childhood,
Of being a girl, on a Saturday morning,
listening to the birds in the old oaks
behind her house, and smelling sea-salt,
because she was ten years old, on a
Saturday morning, in Ogunquit, and--

But she wasn't in
Ogunquit, she was
in Boulder--

And there
had been--



Whatthehell?!

Oh Stu, my God,
where are you?
What's happening?

Harold! Harold did this!
Haroldharoldharold--

OH MY GOD OH
MY BABY--





LATER.

Seven dead.
We got off lucky,
it could have been
much, *much*
worse.

Who?
Please,
Stu, I have
to know.

Nick...There
was a pane of
glass...

And Gue
was
still inside when
the bomb...

And Chad
Norris...

The other four dead
had come up from town:
Andrea Terminello,
Dean Wykoff, Dale
Pederson, and a
young girl named
Patsy Stone.

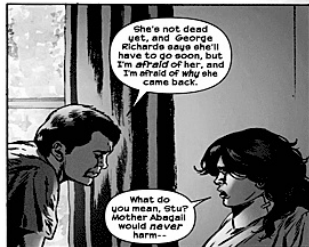
Was
it...Harold?
Nadine?

Yes, they
hurt us, but they
didn't do anywhere
near the damage
they wanted.

We've been
scouring the hills
since daybreak.
If we catch
them...

Fran? What
is it?

Mother
Abigail...





THE BOULDER



R FREE ZONE

1. Harold Lauder's house
2. Stu and Frannie's house
3. Judge Farris' house
4. Mother Abigail's house
5. Glen Bateman's house
6. To the Drive-In in Longmont, where Nadine was taken by the Dark Man
7. Chautauqua Auditoriom, location of the Free Zone Meeting
8. Sunrise Amphitheater, where Harold sets off the bomb
9. To the Boulder Power Station
10. Ralph Brentner and Nick Andros' house, and the site of the explosion.

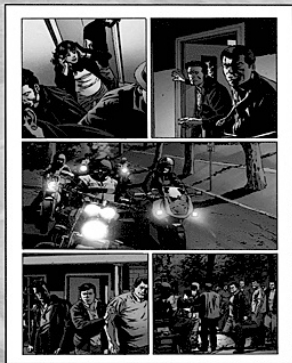
Art Evolution See how the pages evolved from pencils to inks (by Mike Perkins) to colors (Laura Martin)...

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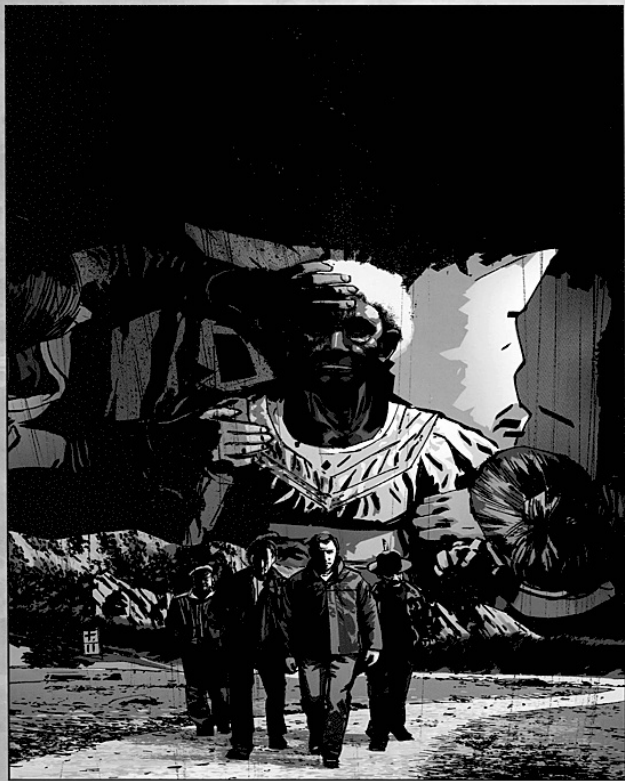
PAGE 18







*Next: "He means for you to try and destroy
this Dark Prince, this Man of Far Leagues."*



"Marvel's vision of *The Stand* remains one of the most faithful on the market...Aguirre-Sacasa and Perkins are firing on all cylinders."

-IGN.COM



After killing off 99% of the world's population, the superflu known as Captain Trips has left the survivors to pick up the pieces. But now that the dying are dead, those who remain have begun to separate into the light and dark. Those on the side of light have gone to Boulder, Colorado, where a peaceful society has been formed. Those on the side of dark have followed the beckoning of the Dark Man to Las Vegas, where he rules with a cruel hand. But not all of the citizens of Las Vegas are bad and not all of Boulder is good.

A showdown is coming, true believers, and in the space between light and dark there is a no man's land.

Based on the popular apocalyptic novel by celebrated author Stephen King, *The Stand* brings together critically acclaimed writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (*Sensational Spider-Man*, *Angel: Revelations*, HBO's *Big Love*) and the gritty visuals of artist Mike Perkins (*Captain America*) to tell a tale that begins at the end of the world.

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